certain snags in the system as a result of which satellite phone to communicate with the Pilots was put into operation; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken to prevent occurrence of such incidents in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) Sir, the failure of the phones was not due to snags in the system, but due to optical fiber cuts caused by unknown agencies. However, 105 telephones working at IGI airport which are from Delhi Cantt. Exchange (569 level) on copper pairs were not affected by the breakdown.

(b) FIR has been lodged in Police Station, Vasant Kunj. Apart from this, CGM, MTNL has taken up the matter with Commissioner of Police for detailed investigation. The manholes of optical fibre ducts are being sealed by concrete as a special measure.

Meal charge to MTNL employees

†1918. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the employees of MTNL, Delhi and Mumbai are being paid meal charge in addition to food allowance;

(b) if so, the amount of such charge being paid per day/per month;

(c) the details of the meal charge paid to the employees and officers working under each of the General Manager and the reasons therefor; and

(d) the justification for payment of meal charge in addition to food allowance?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR): (a) and (b) Only group 'C' and group 'D' employees of MTNL are paid food allowance at Rs. 225/- per month, per employee. Meal charge is paid to those employees who are

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

deployed on duty after normal office hours. This is paid at Rs. 35/- per meal, per employee and at Rs. 15/- towards light refreshment per employee.

(c) The details are as below:—

Details of meal charge paid to MTNL employees

(in Rs.)

Sl. No.	General Manager (Unit)	Amount
1.	GM (East), MTNL Delhi	1,17,844
2.	GM (South-I), MTNL Delhi	1,76,922
3.	GM (Transmission), MTNL Delhi	1,55,636
4.	GM (Central), MTNL Delhi	5,38,409
5.	GM (North-II), MTNL Delhi	32,620
6.	GM (Headquarter), MTNL Delhi	32,295
7.	GM (Trans-Yamuna), MTNL Delhi	2,08,761
8.	GM (LD), MTNL Delhi	1,46,125
9.	GM (South-II), MTNL Delhi	25,12,760
10.	GM (West-II), MTNL Delhi	13,500

(d) Meal charge is paid only under special circumstances where an employee is required to perform duty beyond his normal duty hours.

Payment of local TA to the employees

†1919. SHRI MUNAVVAR HASAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that group A,B,C and D employees of MTNL, Delhi are being paid local TA besides payment of transport allowance;

(b) if so, the amount paid on account of TA/DA from the 1st April 2000 to 31st January, 2002, category-wise, in respect of each office of the General Manager; and

(c) the details of the steps being taken by Government to reduce such wasteful expenditures?

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.